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TO: State AF/C Kevin Aiston  
Fax: (202) 647-1726  
FROM: Embassy Kigali  
SUBJECT: Draft Cable - Pol-Miloff Trip Report

Drafted: Pol-Miloff: A Marley  
Cleared: Charge: J Leader

SUBJECT: Trip Report - Cyangugu; Kibuye; Gisenyi; Gitarama  
21-23 August

1. Summary: Pol-Miloff and CMOC officer travelled by road to Cyangugu on 21 August, then north through Kibuye to Gisenyi on 22 August, and to Ruhengeri south through Nyakabanda to Gitarama on 23 August. While there is movement out of the Humanitarian Protection Zone into Zaire, a mass exodus does not appear to be underway. There is no evidence of a massing of troops by the RPA on the boundaries of the HPZ, but an increase in the number of RPA personnel in Gisenyi has occurred. End Summary.

2. AF Pol-Miloff Marley and newly arrived CMOC officer, CPT John Auciello, travelled by road through Gikongoro to Cyangugu on 21 August to observe the response of the population within the Humanitarian Protection Zone to the withdrawal of the French military forces from the HPZ. No French soldiers were observed during the drive. UNAMIR forces in Cyangugu reported that the last French vehicle convoy had crossed into Zaire at the Rusizi II bridge mid-morning on 21 August, and that the last French forces at Kamembe Airport had departed on a French C-160 Transall in the early afternoon of the 21st.

3. Upon arrival in Cyangugu, the bridge across the Rusizi River into Zaire, was observed to be closed. Several thousand Rwandans were grouped within one-half mile of the closed bridge, but there was not an air of panic or tension. A UNHCR official in Cyangugu stated that the Zairois authorities had closed the bridge the evening of 20 August to prevent the Rwandan refugees from crossing directly into the city of Bukavu. The same official stated that in the morning on the 21st, the Zairois soldiers (FAZ) had had to fire shots into the air to clear the refugees trying to enter Zaire from the vicinity of the bridge, but that no injuries had resulted from the incident. Immediately north of the Cyangugu bridge some refugees were crossing into Zaire by pirogue (the ferrying fee was reportedly approximately \$6 U.S.), while 100 meters south of the bridge some refugees were crossing the river on rafts made of banana tree trunks. Zairois authorities did not attempt to interfere with either of these water crossings.

4. The Rusizi II bridge, some 14 kilometers south of Cyangugu was reportedly opened at 1400 hours local on 21 August. Pol-Miloff

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observed one commercial truck and numerous personnel crossing into Zaire at that point at approximately 1630 hours on the 21st. On 21 August, UNHCR officials, assisted by Cyangugu-based UNAMIR Military Observers, apparently attempting to convince refugees to move further south and cross at Rusizi II, took a group of refugee leaders to the Rusizi II bridge to show them that the crossing was open. By 0830 hours on 22 August, thousands of refugees had made the trek to Rusizi II, choking the road and blocking vehicular traffic. UNHCR trucks carrying potential refugees to Rusizi II and on to refugee camps established south of Bukavu were at the back of the mass of people. Again, however, there was a sense of orderliness rather than panic.

5. UNHCR officials were counting refugees on the road into Kamembe, some 4 kilometers east of Cyangugu. According to the figures provided by the UNHCR official, some 12,000 Rwandans entered Kamembe on 20 August. This was a slight increase over the 11,000 that entered Kamembe on 19 August, and the average of 10,000 per day over the period 16-18 August. These figures should be considered "potential refugees," as the UNHCR is not certain where they are going; from Cyangugu they could either cross into Zaire, or they could proceed to a prepared camp south of Cyangugu.

6. On 21 August, there was a reasonable heavy presence of Ethiopian peacekeeping troops along the highway from the western edge of the Nyungwe Forest to Cyangugu, within Cyangugu, and then along the road from Cyangugu down to the Rusizi II crossing point. Most of the Ethiopians were observed in static positions rather than mobile patrols. None of the Ethiopians' BTR armored vehicles had arrived in Cyangugu as of 21 August. The Ethiopians' base camp is at Kamembe Airport, some 4 kilometers from Cyangugu, where the French base in Cyangugu had been. The Ethiopian troops appeared friendly, but were decidedly less martial in their demeanor than were the French paras and Legionnaires. The primary problem affecting the Ethiopians appears to be in communicating with the local populace. Relatively few of the Ethiopian troops speak English; none were encountered that spoke French. A Catholic nun with whom Pol-Miloff spoke in Kamembe reported that the French soldiers had actively told the populace that the Ethiopians all spoke English, were brought in to support the RPF/RPA, and were opposed to Hutus and the ex-GRF.

7. Also present in the Kamembe, Cyangugu, and Rusizi II areas, and playing an active role in maintaining order, were members of the

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local Gendarmerie force created by ex-FAR Gendarme officer, Major Cyiza. The force numbers approximately 250, more than twice the number of Gendarmes that had been previously reported. The Gendarmes carried AK-47 series rifles. With the exception of Major Cyiza, none of the Gendarmes appeared to have vehicles. All of the 12-15 Gendarmes with whom Pol-Miloff spoke expressed the intent to remain within Rwanda rather than flee, and confidence that the new Government of Rwanda will treat them fairly and accept them into the new national armed forces. One Gendarme lieutenant expressed the opinion that he had nothing to fear from the GoR because, "The citizens who remain here are our witnesses that we have done nothing wrong." Even so, a doctor at the Medecins du Monde hospital in Cyangugu reported that four Gendarmes had been assigned to protect the hospital, but that two of them had fled to Zaire the night of 20-21 August. While in Cyangugu, Pol-Miloff had an extended conversation with Major Cyiza, which will be reported septel.

8. Numerous buildings, both government and private, businesses and residences, were observed in Cyangugu, Rusizi II, and Kamembe which had had their doors, windows, and roofs removed. In many cases, the pulling of window bars from the walls had caused structural damage to the buildings. Gendarmes at the Rusizi II bridge indicated that French troops had stood by watching as Zairois and ex-FAR personnel drove across the border to strip the buildings. They said that on one occasion, French troops had prevented them (the Gendarmes) from taking action to prevent the stripping of a building. A Rwandan nun (who said she was Hutu) in Kamembe stated that when she complained to a French officer about the looting, she was told that the French were there "to protect people, not property."

9. On 22 August, Pol-Miloff and the CMOC drove from Cyangugu to Kibuye, and then continued on north along Lake Kivu to Gisenyi. Unlike the previous day, no Ethiopian troops were observed between Kamembe Airport and Kibuye.

10. There was very little movement of refugees south along the road between Kibuye and the Cyangugu highway at Ntondezi. Pol-Miloff observed three pickup loads of personnel and 25-30 hikers who appeared to be leaving the HPZ. Conversation with ICRC personnel near Cyasha on the 22nd indicated that they had counted approximately 1100 personnel moving south through Cyasha on August 21st.

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11. The road between Ntendezi and Kibuye has experienced several rock slides caused by the onset of the rains. If a road grader and/or dozer does not grade the road soon, it may become blocked in several locations due to continued erosion. There is a road construction/maintenance camp 10-15 miles south of Kibuye that has a grader, dozer, and back hoe. At a quick glance, the camp office has been trashed, but the road equipment did not appear to have been damaged. The only obvious problem is that one tire on the grader is flat.

12. Numerous Rwandans remain on their farms within the HPZ. All along the route between Ntendezi to Kibuye and then on to the northern edge of the HPZ markets appeared to be operating normally in the villages, and women are working the fields. Schools are normally out of session during this time of year, so even the fact that children are outside is not unusual. (Pol-Miloff had never before travelled the route, so lacks an accurate baseline to measure "normalcy.")

13. Kibuye itself seems full of people and calm. The market was full of both customers and merchandise, and no hostility toward either the UN or the U.S. was encountered. UNAMIR has both a sector headquarters for its Military Observers in Kibuye, as well as the battalion headquarters for the composite Francophone African battalion. According to UNAMIR (Senegalese) medical officers in Kibuye, the area at present has sufficient food supplies, and there are no significant health problems affecting the populace. Personnel at the UNAMIR sector headquarters in Kibuye indicate that the population seemingly remains stable and confident, and that they do not anticipate any problems in the vicinity of the town if the RPA remains outside the HPZ.

14. 22 August appears to have been the first day on which the RPA has permitted travel along the direct road between Kibuye and Gisenyi. Prior to that, road travel out of the HPZ from Kibuye was permitted only on the road eastward to Gitarama. Between Kibuye and Nyundo (on the Ruhengeri-Gisenyi highway) there were only three RPA checkpoints, with the third being in Nyundo itself. At the "border" as one travels north out of Kibuye, two RPA soldiers manned the checkpoint - a board across the dirt road. The two were friendly and lifted the "barrier" as soon as the vehicle stopped at their checkpoint. No RPA troop concentrations were observed between Kibuye and Nyundo. There are noticeably fewer people in the countryside between the "border" of the HPZ and Nyundo, than

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there are between Kibuye and the "border."

15. Pol-Miloff and the CMOC officer spent the night in Gisenyi at the UNAMIR Sector 5 Military Observer headquarters. The city of Gisenyi has water, but no electricity.

16. UNAMIR Military Observers in Gisenyi told Pol-Miloff that NGOs in Goma, Zaire are trying to discourage UN officials (both UNHCR and UNAMIR) from trying to induce Rwandan refugees to return to their homes in Rwanda. The NGOs reportedly are arguing that they have an infrastructure and process in place to meet the life support needs of the refugees if they remain in the camps near Goma, but that the refugees would lack such support if they return to Rwanda. Pol-Miloff did not visit Goma on this trip or hear any of these discussions personally, but is simply passing on the information as it seemed to be both of interest and potentially important if true.

17. UNAMIR Military Observers in Gisenyi also report a significant increase in RPA strength in the immediate vicinity of the city. RPA officers have essentially established an Officers Club in the (closed) bar of the Meridien Hotel in Gisenyi.

18. On 23 August, Pol-Miloff drove from Gisenyi to Ruhengeri, south to Nyakabanda and Gitarama, and then east to Kigali. On the road between Gisenyi and Ruhengeri most of the villages appear to have a normal fill of people. Farmers were tilling the fields and the markets are busy. There were very few returning refugees visible along the road. UNAMIR officers indicated that the daily average of refugees returning to Rwanda from the Goma area has dropped to 1000 to 1100. Comment: There are now more than enough way stations to help the trickle of returning refugees that are in need of assistance. End comment.

19. There appear to be a "normal" number of personnel on the farms and in the villages between Ruhengeri and Gatumba. People were herding cattle and/or goats, cutting sugar cane, and preparing the fields for sweet potatoes. Between Gatumba and Bulinga, the only persons encountered were several groups of RPA soldiers along the road. They were friendly, were not operating any checkpoints, but seemed to be moving in groups of 2-6 in the direction of Gitarama. From Bulinga to Citarama, there again appeared to be a normal complement of people engaged in the activities of daily rural life.

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20. Comment. It appears that, at least for the moment, the massive exodus of Rwandan civilians fleeing into Zaire from the HPZ has been avoided. With UNHCR assisting potential refugees to cross into Zaire, the UNREO plan that called for establishing camps in Rwanda to induce people to stay in the HPZ became obsolete.

21. Comment continued. There was nothing to suggest that the RPA was attempting to mass personnel for a movement into the HPZ in either the area between Butare and Gikongoro on the eastern side of the HPZ, or in the area north of the HPZ near Kibuye. If the RPA remains outside the HPZ, UNAMIR personnel are confident that there will be little additional movement of displaced persons/refugees from the zone. End comment.

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